(b) if so, the main probmems identified so far;

(c) the problems out of the above which are due to paucity of funds;

(d) the problems which are due to lack of knowledge; and

(e) the decline noticed in agriculture sector due to the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducted the Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers in 2003 covering different aspects like educational level of farmer households, level of living as measured by consumer expenditure and indebtedness, their farming practices and preferences, resource availability and their awarness of technological developments and access to modern technology. The areas of concern as found in the survey reports include high indebtedness of the farmer households, consumption level below the average of rural households, less accessibility to modern technology, poor awareness on certain important schemes like Minimum Support Price and Crop Insurance and less participation in group activities through cooperative societies etc.

(e) In India, agricultural growth is largely influenced by rainfall and climatic conditions since about 60 per cent area is still rain fed. The latest statistics released by Central Statistical Organisation shows that agricultural sector grew by 1.1 per cent during 2004-05 and the estimated average growth rate during the first two quarters of the current year i.e. 2005-06 is 2 per cent.

Cotton production

2603. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that over 230 lakh bales of cotton was produced in the cotton season 2004-05;

(b) whether the cotton crop is expected to be over 270 lakh bales in the cotton season 2005-06 and whether this will affect the prices;

(c) whether Government are contemplating to export surplus cotton;

(d) whether Government are aware that China will be short of cottion by almost 2.5 to 3 million metric tonnes in the cotton season 2005-06; and

(e) the details of the cotton export plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The Cotton Advisory Board had placed the level of cotton production during cotton season 2004-05 at 243 lakh bales (of 170 Kg. each). The estimated level of cotton production for the cotton season 2005-06 is around 250 lakh bales. However, the final estimation of cotton production for the cotton season 2005-06 is yet to be made.

With good prospects of cotton crop for the second consecutive season as also due to easy availability of cotton, the domestic prices during 2005-06 season have been subdued. As per the information supplied by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), the progressive average rate of kapas was varying between Rs. 1723/- per quintal and Rs. 1977/- per quintal in different States for various varieties as on 12th December, 2005 against the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Government at Rs. 1760/- and Rs. 1980/- per quintal for different staple lengths.

(c) Exports of cotton in the country were placed under Open General Licence (OGL) from 2001 and anybody can export cotton from the country. However, looking to the carry over stock from previous year and the crop prospects, after meeting the domestic requirements, sufficient quantity may be available for exports during the current cotton season. Exports of cotton from the country shall however depend upon price parity.

(d) As per the available reports, due to significant decrease in cotton area as also due to heavy rains in China (Main land), the cotton production is likely to be affected and as per International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) the same is estimated at 5.77 million tonnes as against 6.32 million tonnes during the previous year. As against this, significantly higher textile exports and expanding domestic textile consumption is expected to boost cotton use in China (Main land) from 8.2 to 8.6 million tonnes. As per latest ICAC release of 1st November, 2005, with projected gap of 2.86 million tonnes between production and consumption and with low carry over stocks, China (main land) is expected to increase its imports to fill the gap. The imports by China are forecast at 2.93 million tonnes as against 1.39 million tonnes last season.

(e) As already stated above, the exports of cotton are under OGL.

2604. CANCELLED

Bringing deep sea fisheries under purview of Ministry of Commerce and Industry

2605. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY:
SHRI THENNALA G. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering any proposal to transfer the subject of deepsea fisheries from Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Commerce and Industry due to administrative compulsions;

(b) whether it is a fact that Ministry of Agriculture has expressed its inability to properly appreciate and understand the commercial aspects of deep-sea fisheries sector;

(c) whether it is also a fact that under the present set up, the Ministry of Agriculture is unable to decide issues and problems of the deepsea fisheries in the country; and

(d) the steps proposed to encourage deep sea fisheries in the country through efficient and proper administration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) No, Sir. At present, there is no proposal to amend the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 to entrust deep sea fisheries to the Ministry of Commerce.

(d) The Government is paying due attention to the development of deep sea fishery in the country. A Comprehensive Marine Fishing Policy has been announced in November, 2004 with focus on the developmental needs of deep sea fishing sector parallel to development of fishing and fisheries in coastal marine sector. With a view to streamline fishing operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), guidelines for deep sea fishing operations were issued in November, 2002 which have been modified in September, 2004. Letter of Permission for fishing in EEZ is being issued to Indian entrepreneurs. Permitting joint ventures is also under consideration of Government. An Inter-Ministerial Empowered